

Published by Request.

The Social Evil

PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED.

A PAPER READ AT A MEETING OF THE LAY AND
CLERICAL UNION.

BY

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THE PROCEEDS OF THIS PAMPHLET WILL BE DEVOTED TO THE SUPPORT
OF REFUGES FOR UNFORTUNATE WOMEN, AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
FOR THAT PURPOSE WILL BE RECEIVED BY THE PUBLISHERS.

February, 1858,

VESTRY ROOM, ST. GEORGE'S, BLOOMSBURY.

Having presided at the Meeting of the Lay and Clerical Union at which this paper was read, I have been requested to state the circumstances that led to its publication. The Union was formed for the promotion of Social reform, by the preparation and discussion of papers by numerous professional gentlemen, earnestly solicitous for, and mostly actively engaged in, educational and reformatory movements. The author of this paper, having, it was known, taken deep interest in this pre-eminently momentous subject, was requested to read before the Union a paper upon it. He accordingly read this paper. The members thought that its publication would advance the cause advocated by those who feel that neglect and wilful ignorance have greatly permitted the extension and aggravated the intensity of this glaring evil, and much urged him to print it.

A. B. COWDELL,

Chairman of the Lay and Clerical Union.

THE SOCIAL EVIL.*

“In such discussions, terms which are plain, but not coarse, are at once the least offensive and the least prejudicial. In the sacred Scriptures, on all subjects of this kind, there is what may be called a divine freedom.”—*The Rev. R. Wardlaw, D.D.*

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,

I have been requested by the authorities of this Society to write a paper on Prostitution, and have willingly consented. Willingly, though the subject is a very sad and repulsive one. I conceive nothing that an association such as ours can consider, can be more disagreeable, or more profitable, than this same abomination of English, and especially London, prostitution. We all see one side of it, the outside, and shudder, and pass by. The clergy see one side; the medical men see another; the lawyers sometimes see another; and there is not one of us who does not fear sometimes in his heart that it may be vaster and deadlier than he ever thought. And the reason why I ask you to listen to a few short and imperfect remarks upon so distasteful a theme is just this, that it is vast, and that it is deadly, and that we may know and talk about it more, and either do something ourselves, knowing what ought to be done and what must be done, or at least be ready, when the men who are labouring at it bring forward the right plan, to help them as we may. Above all, that we may learn by earnest discussion of a solemn and miserable subject to *care* about it; to leave off going by on the other side; and to go down and help the lost, who have fallen among thieves—and *such* thieves.

* I wish at the beginning of this paper to acknowledge my obligations to my friend Mr. W. Aeton, and to his Work on Prostitution. Very much of what I have here written, even when not inserted as a quotation, or definitely acknowledged, is drawn from his book. These sheets, I am glad to be able to say, are published with his sanction and assistance. For both benefits, I take this opportunity of tendering him my most hearty thanks.

At the risk of making my paper rather like a sermon, I will let it fall into its three natural divisions.—

The extent and condition of prostitution, especially London prostitution.—Its causes and effects,—and, A few suggestions as to remedies.

First ; The extent and condition of prostitution.

I believe the common idea is, that there is amongst us a class of degraded pariahs, who have fallen once, and therefore hopelessly, from virtue, who at the commencement of their career sometimes flaunt in temporary luxury and wild dissipation, who invariably descend step by step through drunkenness and disease, to lower and lower depths of infamy, last for a few years, and end by dying of disease or starvation, in a hospital, a workhouse, or on a dunghill. This class is larger or smaller, according as our temperament or humour for the time leads us to exaggerate or almost ignore unpleasant subjects. Any way, we are sure that these unfortunates are a small minority of the female community ; that they are, speaking generally, irreclaimable, or as we phrase it, ruined ; that they are short-lived ; a class by themselves ; and that the less that is known of them, and the more completely their existence is forgotten, the better for all parties.

Now even if the data were true, it would admit of more than question how far Christians, or even political economists, are justifiable in ignoring any form of human degradation and wretchedness. Even if the prostitute were as completely set apart for ruin of body, soul, and spirit, from the rest of the community, as we choose to fancy, it is clear to every man who lives in London, and reads the Times, and opens his eyes, that she is daily and hourly exercising a fearfully perceptible influence on those, who, though partners or causes of her guilt, do *not* share her punishment, and through them on society at large.

But if it be, that instead of a class,—a small minority,—a vast number of our female population are to all intents and purposes at one period of their lives, prostitutes;—if they do *not* go from bad to worse, and, under the lash of appropriate punishment, perish in misery in a year or two, public examples;—if they are, on the contrary, re-absorbed by the thousand into the ranks of wives and mothers of Englishmen, how then? That is to say, if multitudes of English wives and mothers have taken the first step in harlotry, and multitudes of English daughters and sisters have passed, are passing, or are going to pass, through the filth, degradation, and danger of whoredom, are we to shut our eyes, or hold our hand, the *strong* hand if need be, as if it were only a *class* being ruined, and not a nation?

“In the year 1851,” I quote from the best authority, Mr. Acton’s work on Prostitution,* “42,000 children were born *alive*, and *registered* in England and Wales, on a total of 2,449,669 unmarried women and widows, between the ages of 15 and 55, or 1.7 per cent.† Each of these mothers has taken the first step in prostitution, that is, on the moderate average of 5 years of unreformed life for each, 210,000, or 1 in 12, of the unmarried females in the country above the age of puberty has strayed from the paths of virtue.” “Two necessary errors here,” he proceeds, “should be allowed for. One woman *may* have and register more than one child in a year: this is clearly a *minute* inaccuracy. The other is, that for the purposes of this calculation we have considered every illicit connexion as fruitful, and the offspring born alive and registered. It is as clearly not too much to say that the

* Prostitution. Considered in its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects, in London and other large Cities; with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of its Attendant Evils. By WILLIAM ACTON, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, formerly Externe to the Female Venereal Hospital in Paris. London: John Churchill, New Burlington-street.

† *v.* p. 18.

reality of the amount, including all such connexions as are unfruitful, or whose offspring is not born alive, or never registered, must be more than twice the above result, or more than 1 in 6 yearly. Some would *treble* the result, making it 1 in 4. The Government commentator on the census of 1851, argues that if there are as many unmarried women living irregularly to every illegitimate child, as there are wives to every legitimate child, there must be 1 in 13 in every year of the unmarried women living unchastely, or 186,920. A result very near the one above mentioned, and for the same reason to be more than doubled. I quote this from the Government work published in 1851.*

In 1852, 55,000 illegitimate children were born alive and *registered* in England and Wales, an absolute increase of 18,000 in one year, and a comparative one, allowing for the increase of population, of 10 or 11,000.†

Again, in the same year 1851, in *London*, 212,293 unmarried women bore and registered 3203 children. Applying the two formulæ just used for England, we find that *at least* 16,331 (by the first) or 15,000 (by the second) of the London unmarried women, are to be taken as *fertile, registering, and unchaste*.‡ When we consider, however, that the vast majority are unfruitful, and do *not* register, and that London is the centre to which country prostitution largely tends, this result is evidently a mere fraction.

A recent and able writer on the subject states—"The increasing prevalence also of the greatest of our social sins is known. For upwards of 80,000 females are compelled to gain their living by prostitution in London; and during last year, 1857, more than 4000 were arrested by the police. Cargoes of them are annually imported from the Continent, because London presents the best market." And further on, "We learn on the best authority, that one house in 60 in London is a brothel, and 1 in 16 of the females of all ages is a public prostitute."—*Lancet*, Nov. 7th 1857.

* The Census of Great Britain. p. 41. † *v* Acton p. 71.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 18

Definite and reliable estimates of the actual extent of London prostitution there are, and can be, none. Those of Paris with all its elaborate regulations and licensing, are hardly entitled to be called even indices of more than the registered, or what may be called the thoroughly professional, vice.

And, remembering the fact that the working classes from the country, to a great extent, cohabit without marriage, and Mr. Mayhew's statement that but 1 in 20 of the street-folk are married, none, I fear, nearer than a very distant approximation, can ever be accomplished.*

Let me, however, lay before you one or two attempts that have been made in this direction.

Sixty years ago, Mr. Colquhoun, the Thames magistrate, estimated the London prostitutes, professedly and palpably such, at 50,000. Not long ago, the Bishop of Exeter spoke of them as reaching 80,000. Mr. Talbot, Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Young Females, made the same estimate. The police reports, confining themselves to the street walkers "known to the police," are lower than these in figures, but considering the probable proportion this one class bears to the whole, at least as high, being 8 or 9000.† "Were there," says Mr. Acton, "any possibility of reckoning all those in London who come within the definition of prostitutes, *i.e.* women who hire their persons in any way, I am inclined to think the estimates of the boldest would be thrown into the shade." ‡

This much is clear. Taking the unmarried women of *London* between 15 and 55 (a very large margin,) roughly at half a million, it seems absolutely certain that during one

* *v.* Acton p. 71.

† I have been informed by Mr. Mayhew, that the police-returns of the number of "street-walkers" for the years 1836, 1851, and 1857, were respectively 6000, 7000, and 9000. Shewing either an accelerating increase in the numbers of this class of prostitutes, or a great improvement in tabulation. I incline to the former opinion; and *v.* Acton p. 15.

‡ *v.* Acton p. 18.

year, *one* sixth of those unmarried are prostituting themselves for hire. Since writing this, I have had kindly obtained for me from the Registrar General's office, the present number of women in London, between 15 and 40; it amounts to 645,322. I do not know the proportion of the unmarried in this number. Supposing it to amount to two thirds roughly, this gives about 400,000, and the proportion of loose women one fifth, or thereabout. Add to these, those untold numbers, who, not for hire, live in systematic concubinage; the thousands on thousands who are the slaves and victims of labourers, costermongers, and thieves, faithful and often hard-working, and also the mass of undiscovered pollution in classes often little suspected, household servants, and others perhaps higher. And now remember this is for one year only. An enormous minority of our unmarried women unchaste for one year.

If they be a class apart, committed in the mass, now and for evermore, to their evil course, there is a chance for the rest. But if it be clear that they do return, and *shortly*, to the ranks of so-called modest women, the fearful question forces itself forward—"Where do they come from? How is this huge army of vice recruited, if the term of service be so short?" I believe, and it is an awful thing to believe, that prostitution is not an exception, but a phase of existence, through which almost innumerable multitudes of our females go. Thousands leave the occupation every year, and the numbers still in it yearly, I believe, increase, or at least, do not diminish. Thousands must come into it yearly, is the only answer, and a sickening one. But then what are the *modest women*? or rather, what have they been?

And now, as to the *condition* of these thousands—what is the beginning, the course, and the usual end of their foul life? Popular prints, novels, and poems, are the worst possible sources of information, and I believe have done infinitely

more harm than good. They excite the curiosity of the lower classes, desirous to see if the harlot does really live in the luxury that the literary and artistic pandars to society represent, and half-inclined to believe it and try ; and they deceive the better-educated into a blind, wilful confidence, against the evidence of their eyes, and of positive facts, that after all the evil is partial, and, sooner or later, certainly meets its just and appropriate retribution, even in this life.

A moment's thought will show that, (exclusive of those lowest weeds of vice, the offscouring of the back slums, whose atmosphere from childhood has been one of moral and physical filth,) personal attractiveness must be, as a rule, the harlot's primary attribute. Not fictitious, either. A smear from a rude finger across her cheek, if rouged, would spoil her evening's work. Our own eyes bear this out. All observers are invariably struck with the evidently high standard of health and merely bodily perfection of the poor "street walkers" as a race.

Physiologically speaking, physical health is inseparable from physical beauty. On no part of the human frame do most diseases show themselves more immediately and more painfully than on the skin, the complexion. Medical men unite in testifying that as a class, London prostitutes stand physically very high. In short, it cannot be doubted, that at the beginning of their career, they are picked women, the healthiest and best, physically speaking, of the female population.*

Parent Duchâtelet, the great French authority on this subject, remarks of the Parisian licensed women, who are constantly drunk, and live a life to which that of many of our street-walkers is pure : " All that I have said on the chances of contracting disease to which prostitutes are exposed, confirms the truth of the position taken by surgeons and others who have had charge of them, viz., that, notwithstanding all

* v. Acton p. 63.

their excesses and exposure to so many causes of disease, their health resists all attacks better than that of the ordinary race of women who have children and lead orderly lives." "They have" as some one has remarked, "iron bodies, which enable them with impunity to meet trials such as would prove fatal to others." *

The records of London Hospitals and Dispensaries, though their incompleteness lessens their value, do, I am assured, thoroughly bear out the same opinion, as far as they go. Prostitutes, as a race, are a singularly healthy and perfectly formed one.

This is the commencement. They start fair, with a vast advantage over their virtuous sisters. Do they lose it? Does (1) specific disease, or (2) suicide, or (3) general misery and degradation, or (4) starvation, kill off these many tens of thousands of women round us in from four to seven years, as the common notion is?

Specific disease.—I feel this is a matter I dare not and ought not to do more than mention, gravely and shortly, and merely because it is necessary to our enquiry. Its nature, statistics, and phenomena would be painful to me to write, or you to hear about, at all minutely. We may leave it safely to the noble body of men whose study it naturally is. I shall merely mention it in this paper when compelled. I am compelled to see if it accounts for any perceptible portion of this class of "picked women." Major Graham, the Registrar General (one can go no higher for an authority,) has compiled a table shewing and classifying all the deaths of males and females attributable to *acquired* disease (I mean not hereditary) in any way perceptibly connected with this cause during the three years 1846-7-8. He includes, for example, deaths from causes such as these—chest affection, consumption, cachexia and debility, paralysis and erysipelas—so that I think we may safely assume that none are omitted, really

* v. Acton p. 63.

arising from specific disease. And the result is, in three years, only 73 women and 54 men, from the ages of 16 to 65 ! The proportion of women to men in London is as 6 to 5, so that the female mortality from these causes is absolutely below the male ; and the population out of which these deaths occurred was more than 2,000,000.* In 1855, (on the same authority, Major Graham's,) the deaths from special disease in *all England and Wales*, between 6 and 65, were only 150, of which those occurring in London were 19.† These estimates, be it remembered, include *all* classes of women. Specific disease, then, clearly counts for nothing as a destroyer of harlots. As many are run over, or perish by accidents, as by this cause.

Suicide.—The romantic method of the harlot's extinction largely believed in on the word of novel-writers. Hear the Registrar General again. In 1840, only 56 women above 20 years of age committed suicide in London, of whom there is no reason to believe that half were prostitutes. In 1855, the female suicides above 20 were only 59, absolutely less, allowing for the increase of population.‡ That is, more virtuous than immodest women have recourse to the violent remedy of self-destruction. *This*, too, must count for nothing. Our prostitutes perish neither by specific disease, nor suicide.

Misery and Degradation.—That is, do they die in harness ? This, of course, since no register of prostitutes, as such, is kept, cannot be demonstrated one way or the other by figures, as the two last suppositions were. But it is as certain and can be as conclusively proved that they do not, to any extent, die prostitutes, as if we had the most elaborate system of inspection and tabulation. They are a healthy class, be it remembered. Their occupation, abominable, and occasionally dangerous though it be, is very light, considered as labour. The vice which tells with ruinous rapidity on the *man*, who after the night of debauchery, must spend the day

* *v.* Acton p. 59. † *Ibid* p. 60. ‡ *Ibid* p. 63.

in severe mental or bodily toil, falls innocuously on the woman, who simply inverts the order of time, and rests while others work, and works while others sleep. There is, and I say it advisedly, *nothing to kill them*. As a rule, they are not, with the exception of the slaves of brothel-keepers, much given to dangerous intemperance. Such as they indulge in, their healthy young frames, and long days of perfect rest, enable them to meet and disregard with far greater impunity than even an Irish labourer who must work all day.

Acton says, "I am led to believe, from the testimony of all observers, that there is no class of women so exempt from all general diseases, as prostitutes. They disappear, it is true, from the streets after three or four years, but this is neither the effect of disease nor suicide."

Now, if there is one fact absolutely certain about the class, it is that there are, to speak roughly, *no old prostitutes*. A few, necessarily a very few, (*comparatively*, I mean,) take to keeping houses of ill-fame, and are seen pacing the streets with their younger victims. But, on the best testimony, beyond the age of 40 or so, there are practically no harlots.

There is nothing to kill them. And no hospital, nor workhouse burial-list, nor dispensary, nor relieving-officers' book, gives the smallest evidence that prostitutes, as prostitutes, are dying anywhere in any different way, or at any different rate, or in any other way distinguishably, from the general population. Think for a moment. Here are (we will say) 80,000 of them, to take the estimate of 60 years ago. According to the popular belief, in addition to the general mortality of women, this 80,000 has to be destroyed in the course of from four to seven years. Our clergy would be overworked with burying alone, our graveyards would be choked, and London would be more death-stricken than in the plague. And this frightful mortality goes on with no perceptible effect on the numbers of the female sex, although

the returns of births show, as usual, more males than females, and without attracting any notice, or causing any record anywhere. This is impossible, if anything is. It is a fact, however we are to account for it, that prostitutes, *as prostitutes*, do not die, to any appreciable amount.

And *Starvation* is disposed of in the last head.

Then, what becomes of them? Healthy above the average, *not* destroyed by special disease, *not* perishing in harlotry, or by their own hands, and yet never reaching even middle life in prostitution, where do they go to?

Reformatories account for one and another. To the untold thousands, alas! they are no more of a refuge, or an obstacle, than an infant's hand to Niagara. It *costs* a large sum to reform each woman, of whom many are not reformed. If provision were made for the reformation of prostitutes with regard to their real numbers, a perceptible portion of London would have to be composed of Reformatories. No. One here and another there is snatched, thank God, literally as a brand out of the fire, but Reformatories are of no account here as to the tens of thousands. What becomes of them? I will quote Mr. Acton's answer, as better than any I could make—"I have every reason to believe," he says, "that by far the larger number of women who have resorted to prostitution for a livelihood, return sooner or later to a more regular course of life. Before coming to this conclusion, I have consulted many likely to be acquainted with their habits, and have founded my belief upon the following data."* He then goes on to shew, 1st, That before the prostitute has been four years at her trade she thoroughly sees the horrors, difficulties, and dangers of the situation, and is ready and willing to escape; 2nd, That she has no incumbrances to hinder her escape; 3rd, That she is healthy, in the prime of life, and with a knowledge of the world far above the common run, rendering her an agreeable companion; 4th, That she is not

* v. Acton p. 64.

likely to bear children (shocking as it is, a material consideration to some in selecting a wife;) 5th, That many have saved money, and literally work out their own salvation as milliners, &c.; 6th, Others, certainly, but comparatively few, turn brothel-keepers, and otherwise make a livelihood out of the trade they have personally left; 7th, Some few emigrate; and, 8thly, The vast majority *marry*. The unceasing action of marriage on prostitution, he considers as yearly increasing, attributing every increase to the increase of prostitution itself from the causes I shall presently mention, and above all from one of them, the yearly increasing difficulty, nay almost impossibility of early marriage in certain ranks of life.

His conclusion,—and, upon his and other men's facts and arguments, my own, and I think every one's will be,—is simply this, that the theoretical position of female honour is confined to a comparatively small class of us. Among hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of our people, it is a name and nothing more—hardly that. And amongst our own class, as the impossibility of marrying except late in life, becomes more and more manifest, the demand, and consequently the supply of the material for the waste fires of youth and strength is daily and yearly increasing; and with greater and greater regularity is, after the battering and moral and physical pollution of prostitution, re-absorbed into the female community, thenceforth to compose no small portion of the wives and mothers of the nation.

There is a very terrible problem for us to work out from all this. We know the number of the female population. We can approximate to the number of prostitutes. And this number is to be entirely renewed every four years. What proportion of our women necessarily pass through this phase of life? I cannot venture to give the answer.

I have only glanced through the heads of this part of the subject. To those who love to know the truth of a thing,

bad or good, I cannot imagine anything of more appalling and engrossing interest.

Before I leave it, let me draw attention to these few thoughts.

1st, The unspeakable moment and importance of such a state of things. If it be a fact that yearly more and more of the wives and mothers of our people are passing through a stage of prostitution, it follows that the plague is spreading *upwards*. Such things *start* from the bottom. Again, its effects on us, as a community, (of which I will speak presently) are, and must necessarily be, increasingly serious. Can it be that the generations born of and brought up by defiled parents, or the nation whose females are widely corrupt, can be unaffected, or pure from taint, either bodily or mental? This we all know, that history shows that wherever two nations, or tribes, or peoples, were brought into collision in the battle-field or otherwise, the impure in this respect gave way, broke up, and through misery and debasement, flickered and went out, unlamented and despised. One example is sufficient, the German and Gothic tribes and the Roman empire. There never was a people who held marriage in such almost romantic honour, or treated impurity with such merciless rigour, as our German forefathers. There never was a community so utterly debased in both respects as the Romans and Greeks of the later empire. And there never was so awful a crushing of one people by another as of those Romans and Greeks by those Germans.

2nd, The futility of the objections usually made by good men to our looking the evil straight in the face like men, and with God's help, doing what we may to cure or mitigate it—any way, our duty.

These are three, I think.

One says, "God has provided a special punishment for this sin. It is too foul to touch. We had better leave the

sinners to their own punishment, trying only, or rather willing, under certain stringent restrictions, to help those of them who endeavour to amend. You will foster sin by doing more." This is more merciful than many would be. And if Jesus Christ had said so of us, where should we all be? His last commands to those who love Him are that they should love their brothers, and their wretched, erring, sin-entangled sisters also. One word more from Mr. Acton—"Those are less impious and erring, than *furthering* God's will, who would widen the gates of the fold of penitence and rest, gather by all possible means yet another crop to the harvest of souls, and claim the Christian's noble birthright of rejoicing over more and yet more repentant sinners." Yes, and not only widen the gate of egress, but labour to shut the gate of ingress.

Another says—"I fear you will endanger the innocent if you make much stir. Our children and women should know nothing of the existence of such sin—we had better keep quiet." And is ignorance innocence? Or is ignorance security? And does such ignorance exist? We will speak of this presently among the *causes* of prostitution. I would only say here that I hardly think any man in his heart *believes* there is much of such ignorance, whatever he may try to believe. And half-concealed vice is tenfold more alluring and dangerous, were it only by reason of excited curiosity, than she is in her naked hideousness.

And a third says, "I wish you well, but I fear it is useless and hopeless to try and do anything definite. Men will have passions, and women will yield to the end of time. I think we had better trust to general education or religious teaching."

This is the worst of all. We want more of Jeremy Taylor's "Give it up, no, never!" General education does nothing and reaches few. And religious teaching never reaches any of *these*, to speak of. And what did God put us

here for, in the middle of the furnace, but that we should labour and toil, till our lives' end for Christ's sake and in Christ's strength, to put it out if we may, any way to snatch brands out of it, and to save brands from going in, and to keep ourselves unspotted? No. God put us here to fight the devil, not to sit still and shut our eyes. And we *can* do something, for we ought, and one involves the other. We can check and lessen the causes of prostitution, *when we know them*. We can palliate, and almost cure some of its effects, *when we know them*. And I think we can strike at the heart of the curse itself, and with a strong hand.

And so we come, in the second place, to the *causes* and *effects* of prostitution.

1. The causes. On this I feel some diffidence in speaking, at least at all positively. Hitherto I have had facts and able men's deductions to rest on. But this must be to a great extent the mere expression of my own opinion. I shall simply enumerate a few of what seem to me the leading causes of prostitution, with some remarks on each. I do not mean to imply by this selection that there are no others, or even that there are none so important as these. Nor do I intend by the order in which they are placed to give one a pre-eminence in evil over another. The infinite complexity of human nature may easily allow one to be the most productive in one class, or in certain circumstances, and another in others.

1st. I will instance *promiscuity of the sexes*, to use a word coined by the French commentators on our English vices. There is an old saying, that three things are the mothers of love—idleness, opportunity, and fulness of bread—and the worst of these is opportunity. This, too, is strictly true of her hideous caricature. Of girls and women ruined by those in their own or inferior rank of life, vast numbers must, and we know on the best and saddest evidence—their

own—do owe their ruin to the infamous lodging-houses, where, to say no more, men and women and boys and girls of all ages herd together in the same rooms and the same beds, unclothed. No such thing, we are assured by Leon Faucher, Richelot, and others, can or does exist abroad, and they express unbounded astonishment at the supineness of a government that allows to the pith and marrow of its people the *possibility* of being so degraded and deteriorated. That reproach, thank God, is not so keenly just as formerly. But it must not be forgotten that the vile habits indulged in in the lodging-house, are practised to a great extent in the dwellings of the poor both in town and country. And an Englishman's house is his castle, so that I fear it is impossible for the hand of power to act on this phase of the very fruitful source of sin I am speaking of, otherwise than by bettering the condition of the poor generally and improving their dwellings. Thousands of lodging-houses have to be purified and regulated yet, and tens of thousands of poor families have to learn the danger of promiscuous herding of the sexes, before *this* gate of ingress can be stopped.

2nd. Here I will mention, but shortly, a minor cause, (alas, that it should be a minor one) of the prosperity of prostitution. I mean, the want of occupation of our young men after business hours. Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do, and idle feet to walk into. What wonder is it that the poor lad tired with driving a quill all day, or serving behind a counter, or setting up type, and with only one room, and that his bedroom, that he can call his own, should wander out for amusement? And what wonder that the casino, the singing and dancing rooms, the public-house, and, finally, the brothel, should have many attractions for an empty head and an unchanged heart? May the Young Men's Associations, of whatever name, and the cheap reading-rooms, and classes, and lectures, prosper.

3rd. The first cause I have mentioned, affects the low of both sexes. I will instance next, one that affects poor females especially. The few means of earning money honestly that are open to women, and the low wages they receive. This is so familiar a cause, that it need only be mentioned here.

Men do half the women's work with us ; women have very little they can do, and there are very many to do it, and they are delivered over to political economy, the laws of supply and demand,—and prostitution.

4th. The foregoing are causes that account for a great deal of the prostitution engendered among those to whom daily bread is a matter of some anxiety. It is clear that though a vast amount of evil arises, and is maintained among these, much is caused by the idle passion, or deliberate villainy of the “*superior* classes” as they are called. It is certain that the most dangerous and offensive ; and, it is more than probable, that the most *extensive* form of prostitution is that caused and supported by a class of men, who are above most of their victims in station, such as clerks of all grades, the professions, and so on, up to members of parliament and peers. The causes that affect these, our class, the middle class especially, in their contribution to the general abomination, are those I would next note.

And first and foremost I place the increasing difficulty, or rather impossibility, of marriage. Not to labourers, mind, nor to humble artizans, nor to soldiers and sailors ; but to that vast army who call themselves gentlemen, the most dangerously fascinating, be it remembered, of all, to the girls just below them. I have read, as hundreds have, the recent discussions on this subject in the public prints, and have been bitterly grieved to see and to hear, what I believe to be so awfully serious a subject treated in so light and idle a tone. It seems to me only too clear a proof that the rapid increase of the wickedness is telling more and more on the moral sense of the community.

Some philosopher has remarked, with an appreciable quantity of truth, that all evil is only exaggerated or distorted good, and that the better the good, the worse the evil. I think the rule is true here. We know that the lawful love of man for woman, and woman for man, is the best and holiest affection in our nature, as it is the oldest; a record or remembrance, as it were, of Paradise-happiness, a sign of what was before the first thrill of maternal love even had ever been experienced: and not only of what *was*, but of what *will be*,—the emblem selected by the Holy Spirit as the only appropriate one to set forth the mystical union of Christ with His saved and sanctified Church.

We have forbidden this blessing to exist for ourselves and our fellows, unless within certain stringent limits, yearly drawn closer, and enclosing a narrower field. Outside that field its place is usurped, as was to be expected, by a ghastly and destructive phantom of it. We forbid a wife, except to very few gentlemen, and to the very many gentlemen, the harlot has taken her place. Thousands of legal and medical students, and the junior members in both professions are living in sin, more or less systematic. To a great extent it is they and their fellows in other professions and trades, who, I firmly believe, pay and keep going the harlotry that meets us in the streets of London, flaunting and defiant. And I believe, that dared they marry without losing caste, many (no one can even guess how many) would, and leave their sin.

This is stated on good authority, that many and more each year, marry the partners of their guilt as life goes on, and no probability of the house in May Fair and the footman and the brougham appears, and they begin to feel the love and faithfulness which some even of the lost ones shew. Mesalliances, as they are called, are yearly commoner. I know of several myself, some contracted with the lowest of the low, by men of good family and good abilities. Our harlots exist

in the numbers they do in London, because young gentlemen and young ladies cannot and dare not marry, without ceasing to be gentlemen and ladies, unless in the rare cases where one or both has means sufficient to maintain the same outward shew as the respective parents.

5th. The next cause that strikes me as worth noticing, is that of faulty education of our boys. They are not educated to continence. From whom, as a rule, do they learn those things that all men know, but few men speak of? Who teaches them the beauty and exceeding great reward of chastity, and the horrors and penalties of impurity? Their first lessons in what they fancy manliness, if not from grooms and servants, are from schoolfellows and lads like themselves. In the flush and dawn of manhood, a boy full of Aristophanes, Terence, Plautus, Martial, and Juvenal, is let loose in London or a university, to be a *man*, with more money than his school allowance ever reached before, and he has to learn the control or the indulgence of his passions for himself. Who can wonder at the saddened homes, and grieving parents, all around us? A lad disappears, he is not to be asked after, friends look grave when his name is mentioned, he has been *wild*. And who taught him better? Who taught him to apply abstract lessons to his own case? Who told him that the weapons so carefully sharpened and put into his hands, were to be used by him *now* in his coming strife with the world, *the flesh*, and the devil? Who told him of the dangers that were coming *definitely*, and of his own weakness against them *definitely*? Not his father. Not his tutors or guardians. They did not like to speak of such things, and the poor lad had to find it all out for himself by experience, and oh, what miserable experience, even to the end of life.

I cannot see why a father should be the last to lay the whole case, fully, clearly, gravely, before his boy.

I know that a public school is, if not *the* worst, yet one of

the worst places in which it is possible for a boy to be initiated into the secrets of coming passions, coming *luxuries*, and coming dangers.

I must not forget to mention the deficient character of the general education bestowed upon our girls in worldly matters. In national and other schools they are taught needlework, reading, and writing, and sometimes smatterings of sciences and accomplishments utterly useless to them. The aim, and it succeeds, is apparently to provide milliners with assistants a little above and discontented with their situation. And what more dangerous condition can a girl be in? Housewifery,—what makes good wives and mothers, we are informed they leave school very ignorant of. It is very hard to find good household servants. And milliners so swarm, that they starve and crush each other.

6th. Again, I think one material cause, not of prostitution, but of the fearful height to which it has grown among us, is our own wilful and determinate ignorance, or rather ignoring of it.

It really seems as if, in spite of our own knowledge, and our own sometimes grievous experience, we thought that the generation rising among us, had been born either without passions, or with powers of regulating and controlling them, utterly different from the feeble ones we remember, if not quite superhuman. I believe and know that fathers and mothers pray in secret and with tears, that God would keep their boys and girls from the snares of an evil and corrupt world. But why in public do they ignore those snares, doing nothing to destroy them, and never enquiring *how* wide, *how* dangerous they are. Why does society act only as the avenger, not the preventer, of this particular evil. I know it is foul to touch, and miserable and sickening to speak of, never more than now; so much the more reason for putting false delicacy aside, and speaking of it, and acting against it, as it is, hideous, vile, and enormous.

The placid hypocrisy that for the sake of decency and ease assumes mutual ignorance, is not purity. Better talk it out, and act it out. To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin ; and to know the uttermost of an evil, to admit it fully, that we may attack it, is to do good.

The last cause I have time, or you I fear, can have patience for now, is, the comparatively total impunity of seduction, desertion, prostitution, and its open and flagrant exhibition, and of the worst of all, procuring. This is a difficult matter, and the advisability of State interference I will consider presently, in speaking of remedies. Every one knows that the seducer of women, so long as they are above a comparatively early age, is practically unpunished and unpunishable. The shameful farce of the paternal action for damages is a byword among us for uselessness. To seduce a girl is not criminal in England except to the girl, the law lays not a finger on the seducer. Society does not, but both unite in considering the woman as the seducer, and laying the punishment on her. True, if she bears her victim, as the law considers him, a child, she may apply for a summons and get an order in bastardy for the maximum of 2s. 6d. a week. I do not know the proportion of cases where such an order is applied for, nor the proportion in which, when applied for, it is obtained, I have reason to believe they are both very small. If the application be delayed twelve months the claim is barred ; and when it is enforced, it is the idlest caricature of real justice we have in our code. Still worse is the social position unhesitatingly accorded to the professed seducer. It is repeated *ad nauseam*, but truly enough, that the persons who would shudder at the sight of the victim, invite the destroyer to intimacy and contact with their own daughters. I suppose we have all met men in drawing-rooms, who, to every one's knowledge, were not fit for honest women to meet or speak to. The manufacture of prostitutes is visited with

no punishment from men, nor is their maintenance, nor are their unblushing excesses, while virtuous women are jealously watched, hard worked, and underpaid; once fallen, and struggling up again, they are struck back remorselessly as the vilest criminals. But once hopelessly and resolutely vicious and immodest, they enter a new world, and have a license and a consideration they never knew before.

The legal provisions of our statute book regarding prostitution can hardly be stated in a paper like this, short and insufficient though they are. The Metropolitan Police Act mentions it once or twice along with furious driving, bill-sticking, horn-blowing, obstructing footways, and so forth. A few other Acts provide partially for it, and for some allied evils, disorderly houses, indecent behaviour, fraudulent defilement of girls under 21, etc. And such police provisions as do really apply to the public exhibition of immorality are rendered useless by the refusal of the magistrates to enforce them against one, and not all, on the dubious word, moreover, of a common constable.

Whatever, and however good, the cause at present, the fact is that the most open and shocking exhibitions of prostitution are, among us, attended with perfect impunity. Immoral foreigners are shocked at the diabolical orgies of the Haymarket, the sights and sounds of Portland-place, and the abominations of the Parks. And, worst of all, the *procuring* of seduction or prostitution is, really, quite unpunished, and unpunishable.

There is a class of persons among us, to the number, I read, of 4,000, whose trade and business is to procure the regular supply of loose women for the London market by any means. And if they keep out of the letter of the Act for preventing the defilement of girls under a certain age, I know of no means by which they can practically be either prevented or punished.

There are many other causes I could mention, and many, doubtless, that have escaped me, for the present state of prostitution among us. I must, however, having indicated these, mention shortly a few of the more obvious

2. *Effects of prostitution.* Over this we may pass lightly. It is not needful to argue minutely to prove their existence or their fatal character. 80,000 prostitutes cannot ply their trade without producing some effect on the community. That effect may be considered as affecting the *whole* of man's nature, body, mind, and spirit; that is, its effect on the individual. And again, its effect on the community must be considered both politically and economically.

Of the repulsive subject of the bodily effect of the evil I wish to say as little as possible. No one—not even medical men—know how bad or how great it is. The Registrar-General's Reports from 1843 to 1857 show that it is increasing, especially among children. Special disease, though it may and does (as I have already stated) to no appreciable amount *itself* shorten the life of healthy adults, falls with deadly ferocity on their hapless offspring. In 1855, 269 female children under 1 year old, 318 under 5 years old, to 150 females from 5 to 65, died from this cause, and 579 children under 1 year, of both sexes, to 947 deaths. I am assured by one of the medical officers of the Samaritan Hospital, that the cases of children destroyed by hereditary taint of this nature is yearly increasing. The bodily effects of vice on men and nations is too well known to need any comment, if we once believe in the existence of the vice. Nights of debauchery and days of necessary labour are burning our lads' candles of life at both ends with terrible rapidity in many cases.

I have been told on medical authority, but in this early stage of the inquiry I know not whether to believe it, that the constantly vitiated condition of our regiments through

this special disease, is one chief reason why other ailments tell on them with such fatal energy, and double and treble the mortality in bodies of men, picked for health, and perpetually weeded—as the late Report of the Army Commission has lately startled and appalled the country by announcing. I may state, however, that from 1830 to 1847 from 181 to 206 per 1,000 men were annually diseased, or as Dr. Gordon calculates, 1-5th of the whole effective force of the country are annually in hospital for 22 days from special disease.

More serious, I think, than this, the immediate and natural consequence of breaking the law of God, is the mental deterioration caused thereby. I believe medical men agree that habitual impurity is one of the most fatal hindrances possible to mental power of any sort. Whether the manifestly increasing emptiness and frivolity of our literature, or the greater and greater shallowness of our learning, are in any way attributable to this cause, I hardly like to say dogmatically. But I do think I perceive, and clearly, that the class of men most deeply dyed with this vice are, with some great exceptions of course, increasingly feeble, and increasingly ignorant. And the floods of trashy green novels that our bookstalls teem with are certainly the appropriate food for enervated and defiled brains. That the bodies and minds of the miserable women are none the better, either in themselves or in their offspring (when they have any) for their course of life, I need not stay to argue.

But both these effects sink into insignificance before the last and worst—the spiritual. We see our congregations more and more composed of women. We see none but women around the communion table. Vulgar infidelity and blasphemy may be no worse than formerly, but that quiet deadness, and indolent fatalism, of which all complain in our young men, is a sign I believe, in multitudes of cases, that they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are

evil, and *in this way*. I never have found any men so bitter against sanctifying religion as habitually impure men. “Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of *death*,” spiritual, mental, and sometimes bodily death. The wider unclean indulgence, and cheap and easy opportunities for it, spread, the more distasteful to its slaves will the religion of a merciful and pure Redeemer appear.

The importance of prostitution, if the facts be at all as I have stated them, in a political and economical point of view, is difficult to exaggerate.

It would need a paper, or many papers, better than I could compose, to sift such a question at all satisfactorily. It will be sufficient here to remember that the *family* is the strength and wealth of a nation. It always has been, and always will be. And the family *productive, increasing, and moral*. Whatever threatens to bring that system into disrepute, as amongst the Romans formerly,—the French, and alas! the present English young men now—is a fair subject for anxious political remedies and prophylactics. Whatever hinders the formation, or the productiveness, or the morality of the family, seems to me a matter for instant and powerful, though wise, repression. The *home*, not the club or the tavern, is the strength and wealth of England. The wife, not the paramour, nor the wife that has been the paramour, should be the mother of her children.

And now, and last, the *remedies*. Can anything be done to cure, or to check? If it can, it ought. And I believe it both can and will. The question really is, by *whom*—individuals, or the State. Hitherto it has been practically left to individuals, and the result is not such as to make us desire that it should still be so. There are some things too vast for us to deal with single-handed; and this is one. Whether our streets shall be still a public disgrace; whether the man who ruins and deserts the woman that has given up

all for him shall still be altogether unpunished ; whether his children shall still be supported for him by the community, and his victim be driven perforce to the streets to escape from starvation ; whether the lost ones that crowd our pavements shall still be allowed, nay, obliged to ruin the *bodies* as well as the souls of those whom they attract ; whether the wretches who profit by their seduction and degradation, shall still be free to pursue their unhallowed traffic, secure from any supervision ; and whether cargoes of foreign vice shall still be openly imported, are *national* questions, and the nation must decide them. I do not mean to disparage individual effort. May every attempt to save the harlot's soul and body prosper as it deserves. Were there hundreds of men such as Jackson, whose noblest title was the epithet applied to him in scorn, "The Thieves' Missionary," there would not be one too many. But the best individual effort will be to think and talk and write about this grievous and shameful sorrow of our land, and never let it rest till *something* is done. And that *something* must be, not only to save a soul here and a body there ; not merely to found societies for the suppression of vice, and reformatories, and Magdalen hospitals, excellent and noble though all these be ; but to check and even prohibit with the strong hand, the *aggression* of vice. And this the State must do—and I hope and trust will do—and that soon. By what means, is not for me to say.

But before concluding I will make one or two general remarks and suggestions. First, two stumbling-blocks should be cleared away. I mean the notion that Government is to begin a crusade to suppress prostitution itself ; and the notion that the interference of Government with it, will be a sanctioning or licensing of it. Prostitution can never be suppressed, any more than vice itself. People cannot be made virtuous by Act of Parliament, and their methods of vice cannot be put down by force. And if they could, they ought

not. If men and women *will* do wrong, I do not see what earthly right Government has to prevent them, so long as they injure no one but themselves. But when their wrong doing is a curse and a scandal and a shameful evil to all others, when it is public and *aggressive*, the State is as bound to check and punish them as if they were burglars. Maine Liquor Laws will not do in England. And any measure on this subject, of which suppression of the evil itself is an integral part, will fail, and rightly. Repression of the offensive and dangerous publicity of it is a very different thing. And protection of the weak and innocent from destruction is a very different thing. No one has a right to enter a house by force to see that the inmates are clean and live soberly. But Government *has* a right, and uses it daily, to enter any house that is a public nuisance to others, either because it has no drains, or because twenty people of different sexes sleep in each room.

And as to the notion that legislating for a vice that you cannot prohibit entirely, will be a sanctioning of it. There is some ground for this fear, in the fact of the systematic licensing of prostitutes, so largely practised on the continent, I believe almost universally, with the exception of the States of the Roman Church. There is little fear of such an expedient being adopted here, and we need not stay to consider whether it would be allowable or expedient. I have heard many able arguments in its favour, but my own opinion, or perhaps I should more honestly call it feeling, is still strongly against it. But surely the acknowledgment on the part of government, that a particular vice exists, and that it can but partially be met, together with the attempt to bring it under some sort of control, is not a licensing or sanctioning of that part of it which government cannot deal with, and has no right to. Drunkenness is a vice, but no one will say that because the police can take up a gentleman for being drunk and dis-

orderly in the street, but cannot trouble him if he falls under his own dining-room table, drunkenness is sanctioned by government. It would be highly inexpedient, many excellent and sensible persons think, to make every woman and house of ill-fame in London take out a yearly certificate, and provide doctors to inspect them weekly. But this is a very different thing from prohibiting public solicitation, and enforcing the prohibition; from forbidding the disgraceful orgies, and the open and unblushing parading of the harlot. A Holywell-street publisher's private residence is secure from the police magistrate's warrant; but when he exposes obscene prints, and filthy advertisements of filthy works for sale, this dangerous publicity of his peculiar tastes is justly prevented, and he is, not unjustly, punished.

With that part of this evil, then, that is aggressive, and therefore dangerous to the community, the Legislature and the Executive have equal right to deal, not in wrath, not in hostility, but in mercy to the sinners and the sinned against. And here I would most earnestly urge the claims of *Refuges*—(not penitentiaries, or prisons, or mere hospitals—but Refuges for the lost, such as those alluded to on the outside of these sheets), on all who wish to act against *prostitution*, though not against prostitutes.

Do not let our fallen sisters have it to say, that our attempts to reform and provide for them, result only in a cruel hunting of them hither and thither, stamping out houses of ill-fame in one parish, and seeing them open in another, each parish meanwhile wrangling with its neighbour, while good men are disgusted, and lost and weary wanderers are embittered more than ever against their would-be deliverers, whose efforts end in practical persecution. Have the Refuge ready, open to all, as open as His mercy in whose name it would be established and maintained, open to the worst and lowest and vilest, all the more gladly that they are so;—and *then* work, *then* legislate.

Lastly, it may be replied that the State does interfere already. I cannot lay sections out of Acts of Parliament before you now; but I have examined all that, to my knowledge, even remotely touch the subject, and my conclusion is the same as that of many others, that they are totally insufficient. They are few, and very inoperative.

One manifest reason of this, I have not yet seen noticed, I mean the uncertainty as to the light in which the evil is to be looked upon. English law regards prostitution (and its cognate evils) from two points of view: 1, as a nuisance; 2, as a crime, and it deals with it *thoroughly* in neither. It is not against nature, or incompatible with social existence, and so is not looked upon out and out as a crime, and it is too immoral and too extended an evil to be merely a nuisance. A little thought will shew that it is impossible to treat any great social evil as both crime and nuisance, *i.e.* both as *malum prohibitum* and *malum in se*. I think the insufficiency of the present law arises from the attempt to do this. Juries and magistrates will not treat as a crime, what the Police Act treats as a mere nuisance; nor as merely a nuisance what the law of God, and consequently the laws of the realm, *call* a crime, and what is not thoroughly provided for as a nuisance. Now it is *necessary*, I think, to do one thing or the other. Recent discussions and the best opinions, clearly shew the impossibility, and the inadvisability, of dealing with the matter as a crime. No legislature would pass a law to punish prostitutes for being prostitutes, or men for consorting with them. No juries would enforce it.

Public prostitution must be treated, then, simply and solely as a nuisance, that is, as a thing illegal, not wrong; socially, not morally evil; to be regulated, not extirpated, which is impossible. The Police Act, indeed, now regards prostitution with all its concomitant evils, as no more criminal, or punishable, or preventible than an orange girl's crying oranges on

Sunday morning, or a drayman's sitting on the shaft, instead of walking by his horses; and the reason is, the natural fear of extravagant severity. It *must* be boldly dealt with as a nuisance and no more. And though it is not my object to devise schemes, I think it must be dealt with by the same machinery that other nuisances require for their regulation, limitation, and to a certain extent, repression.

It *cannot* be dealt with as murder is. It *must* therefore be dealt with like bone-boiling.

What an untold blessing to the land it will be, when the seducer knows that he must take on him the *expense*, as well as the pleasure of his sin, that others will no longer support his children, and pay for his cruelty and vice; when the procuress drives her trade in fear and trembling; when the harlot can escape whenever she chooses, and her miserable life can no longer be one of open dissipation and public mad excitement, but must be one of decent, regular, vulgar, unromantic sin; when our lads will have to go *out* of their way for vice, and our girls will be protected by the strongest fear, the strongest love,—that of the pocket; when the house of ill-fame must be one of the quietest in the street for very terror; when, in fine, with all its shortcomings, the strongest and most righteous hand there is, that of English law, will have grasped, not to crush, not to tamper with, but gently, wisely, and firmly to control, this unspeakable evil.

May God put it into the hearts of the right men to think about it, and give them wisdom and strength to do the right thing for it.

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